



# CMAA Wine Society

## National Wine Program Grading Standards & Evaluation Guide

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## Purpose of This Document

This guide is intended to provide clarity and transparency regarding the evaluation process for the CMAA Wine Society Wine Program Awards.

Our grading system is designed to reward intentionality, global breadth, program discipline, presentation standards, and overall leadership in wine program management.

Scoring is divided evenly into two primary categories, each representing 50% of the total score.

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## I. Objective Wine List Evaluation (50%)

This portion evaluates the substance, structure, and global representation of your wine inventory.

### A. Global Coverage

We evaluate:

- Number of countries represented
- Number of regions within those countries
- Representation of subregions, AVAs, AOPs, DOC/DOCG, etc.
- Balance between Old World and New World selections

Programs that demonstrate thoughtful global diversity will score higher in this category.

While some clubs may have strong concentration in a particular area (e.g., Napa Cabernet or French Bordeaux), clubs competing for top distinction should demonstrate meaningful representation across the major wine-producing regions of the world.



## **B. Depth & Structure**

We also assess:

- Breadth of varietals
- Balance between classic and emerging regions
- Tiered offerings (entry-level through prestige bottlings)
- Large format bottles (magnums and above)
- Half bottles or small format offerings
- Vintage verticals

The broader and more intentionally constructed your list, the stronger your score potential.

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# **II. Wine Program & Presentation Evaluation (50%)**

This category evaluates the professionalism, organization, execution, and leadership demonstrated in your wine program.

It includes both:

1. Your Cover Letter (Program Narrative)
  2. The Design, Accuracy, and Structure of Your Wine List
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## **A. Cover Letter (Program Narrative)**

Your cover letter is a critical component of the evaluation. It should clearly articulate the philosophy and operational structure behind your program.

**Please Address the Following:**

### **1. Program Philosophy & Strategy**

- Overall wine philosophy
- Buying and allocation strategy
- Pricing and markup structure
- Inventory management practices



- Cellaring philosophy (what is meant to age vs. what is meant for immediate consumption)

## **2. Glassware Program**

Glassware is an essential component of wine service and guest experience.

Please specify:

- What glassware program utilized
- Whether you use varietal-specific stems
- If premium wines are served in upgraded glassware
- Whether glassware standards are consistent throughout all service areas

Thoughtful glassware selection reflects the seriousness and intentionality of your program.

## **3. Education & Member Engagement**

- Staff wine training programs
- Sommelier involvement
- Member tastings, wine dinners, vertical events
- Wine programming

## **4. Storage & Preservation**

- Temperature control systems
- Wine preservation systems for by-the-glass programs
- Inventory rotation practices

Your cover letter should tell the story of your program. We are evaluating leadership, intentional design, and disciplined execution — not simply the size of your inventory.

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## **B. Wine List Design & Accuracy**

We closely evaluate:

- Grammar and spelling
- Clean formatting and readability
- Logical spacing and layout
- Consistent organizational structure
- Correct regional and appellation information
- Accurate vintages and producer details



Professional presentation and precision matter.

Your wine list should be organized clearly by:

- Country
- Region
- Subregion
- Producer

Whatever organizational structure you choose must be purposeful and consistent.

For example:

If you choose to group all Chardonnays together regardless of region, you must apply that structure consistently. Mixing organizational styles (some by varietal, some by region) creates confusion and reflects poorly on program discipline.

Consistency signals professionalism.

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## **Inventory Discipline & Vintage Appropriateness**

Clubs are evaluated not only on what appears on the list, but why it appears on the list.

Wines that appear solely because they have remained in inventory — rather than because they are intentionally positioned — may negatively impact scoring.

Examples include:

- Older vintage Rosé that should be served young for brightness and freshness
- White wines well beyond their optimal drinking window
- Entry-level wines being held longer than stylistically appropriate

Unless a wine is intentionally celled and presented as a mature offering, aged inventory that does not align with stylistic expectations may result in point deductions.

Fresh wines should be fresh.

Age-worthy wines should be presented with purpose.

Inventory discipline reflects program leadership.



# Automatic Deductions

Certain errors result in automatic point deductions.

## Missing Vintages (Wine by the Glass)

If vintages are missing in your Wine by the Glass section, an automatic **-5 point deduction** will be applied to this 50-point category.

This means the maximum possible score in this section would be **45/50**.

Please ensure:

- All wines list correct vintages
- Appellations and regions are accurate
- Information is complete and consistent

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# Final Guidance

The highest-scoring programs are not necessarily the largest.

They are the most:

- Globally representative
- Intentional
- Organized
- Accurate
- Disciplined
- Consistent

Your wine program reflects your leadership and your club's culture.

We hope this guide provides clarity and helps you position your program for the highest level of recognition.